



THE
MYSTERY
OF THE SUPPOSED
COCK-LANE GHOST
REVEALED, &c.



[Price One Shilling.]

1742

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THE
MYSTERY REVEALED;

Containing a SERIES of

TRANSACTIONS

AND

AUTHENTIC TESTIMONIALS,

Respecting the supposed

COCK-LANE GHOST;

Which have hitherto been concealed from the
PUBLIC.

*— Since none the Living dare implead,
Arraign him in the Person of the Dead.*

DRYDEN.



LONDON:

Printed for W. BRISTOW, in St. Paul's Church-yard ;
and C. ETHRINGTON, York.

MDCCXLII.

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1851.

THE

Mystery Revealed, &c.

IT is somewhat remarkable, that the Reformation, which in other countries banished superstition in England, seemed to encrease the credulity of the vulgar. At a time when Bacon was employed in restoring true philosophy, King James was endeavouring to strengthen our prejudices, both by his authority and writings. Scot, Glanville, and Coleman, wrote and preached with the same design; and our judges, particularly Sir Matthew Hales, gave some horrid proofs of their credulity.

Since that time, arguments of this kind have been pretty much rejected by all but the lowest class. The vulgar have indeed, upon several occasions, called for justice upon supposed criminals, and when denied, have often exercised it themselves: their accusations, however, in general, fell upon the poor, the ignorant, the old, or the friendless, upon persons who were unable to resist, or who, because they knew no

guilt, were incapable of making an immediate defence.

But of all accusations of this nature, few seem so extraordinary, as that which has lately engrossed the attention of the public, and which is still carrying on at an house in Cock-lane near Smithfield. The continuance of the noises, the numbers who have heard them, the perseverance of the girl, and the atrociousness of the murder which she pretends to detect, are circumstances that were never perhaps so favourably united for the carrying on of imposture before. The credulous are prejudiced by the child's apparent benevolence: her age and ignorance wipe off the imputation of her being able to deceive, and one or two more, who pretend actually to have seen the apparition, are ready to strengthen her evidence.

Upon these grounds, a man, otherwise of a fair character, as will shortly appear, is rendered odious to society, shunned by such as immediately take imputation for guilt, and made unhappy in his family, without having even in law a power of redress. Few characters more deserve compassion, than one, that is thus branded with crimes without an accuser, attacked, in a manner, at once, calculated to excite curiosity, and spread defamation, and all without a power of legal vindication. If a person

son in such circumstances disregards calumny, and appears unconcerned, he is then accused of obstinacy and impudence; if he shrinks at the reproach, his timidity is construed as a symptom of his guilt: a writer of the life of Urban Grandier, who was maliciously accused, and burnt for being a magician, thus describes his situation: *If he spoke like an orator, says the historian, his accusers observe that the devil inspired his eloquence; if he was silent, they looked upon it as a tacit avowal of his guilt; when he groaned aloud under the torture, they called it obstinacy; when he fainted away, they asserted; that his familiar had rendered him insensible.* In short, if the credulous are resolved to suspect, even opposite and improbable circumstances, will serve to awaken suspicion; and then calumny shall grow, though incapable of being traced to the author, or though apparently propagated by malice, resentment, or imbecility.

It is, however, a great instance of the good sense of the public upon the present occasion, that even the vulgar have scarce given the smallest degree of assent to this deception. Tho' no scheme was ever laid with more low cunning, and carried on with more indefatigable application, yet it has found but very few partizans, even among the very lowest of the people, who are ready enough to believe any tale of this nature. They readily perceived that it was but a trick;

they were only amazed at what could be the motives for so black an imputation; and probably desired information; they heard the person's character who had been accused, very freely treated in the news papers, and perhaps were not unwilling to believe a crime against a man, whom they had been taught to dislike. I shall therefore, upon the present occasion, give the public a more satisfactory account of this whole transaction, than has hitherto transpired, and that, without partiality or prejudice, I shall repeat nothing as a truth, that will not, upon the closest examination, be found *strictly so*; living witnesses shall be appealed to in proof of each assertion. More studious of defence than recrimination, nothing is asserted that even the opponents will not confess. It is the duty of every honest man, to exculpate the guiltless, and enlighten the public, and these are the only motives for my present publication.

The circumstances that gave rise to this affair, are in short as follows. In the year 1756, Mr. K— was married to Miss E— L— of L— in the county of Norfolk, and during the short time she lived with him, they enjoyed all the happiness a married state could bestow. But in about eleven months after their cohabitation, Mr. K— having taken the Post-office at S— in Norfolk, he and his wife were scarce settled there a month, when she died in childbed. This fatal accident therefore determined him to lay aside all thoughts
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of public business, but as he had engaged for a year certain at the Post-office, he was obliged to keep house till the expiration of that term. During this interval Miss F—— L——, the person whose ghost is supposed to appear, and who was sister to his late wife, and lived with her as a companion, at her decease continued to reside with Mr. K——, in the character of his house-keeper. The frequent intercourse arising from such a situation, soon produced a very tender affection between them. Mr. K—— however finding, that by the strictness of the canon law, he was not allowed to indulge his passion, (as his deceased, wife's issue by him was born alive, tho' it died a short time after birth) took a resolution of coming up to London, with intention of purchasing a place in some public office, and in hopes of finding a cure from absence and dissipation. Their affections however seemed to encrease by absence ; he constantly received letters from the young lady, filled with repeated entreaties to spend the rest of their lives together, and with positive protestations of coming to London after him even on foot, if he did not procure her a more creditable conveyance. These instances of her regard and resolution awakened all his passion, and at last induced Mr. K—— to comply with her solicitations, thus at once to gratify his own inclination as well as her's. As the canon law would have allowed him to marry her, had there been no issue born alive from his former wife, he thought himself

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at least, *in foro conscientiae*, permitted to gratify his passion, nor could he see why so small an obstacle as the birth of a child, that so short a time survived its mother, should prevent his happiness.

During their residence at S— they had contracted an acquaintance with one Mr. L.— a gentleman who lived some years in the same neighbourhood. To this gentleman, who was now settled in London, Mr. K— had recourse as a friend; and understanding that he soon purposed spending a fortnight in Norfolk, about Whitsuntide 1759, Mr. K— communicated the whole affair to him, shewed him her letters, and entreated him, if she persisted in her resolution of coming to London, to conduct her up to town upon his return. The gentleman complied, and upon his going into the country, waited upon Miss F—, informed her of his instructions, and as his principal business lay at a village about 20 miles distant from her, where he intended to stay eight or ten days, he desired to be acquainted with her final resolution by letter; accordingly, three or four days before his intended return to town, he received a letter from her, requesting him to meet her at S—m, a market town, exactly midway between them. Here they agreed to go for London that night, and as the Yarmouth stage coach was going then for London, they took that opportunity, and arrived in town at about five in the evening.

Mr.

Mr. K—, not being exactly apprized of the day of her arrival, was at that time at his country lodgings at Greenwich, upon which Miss F— took a pair of oars and went to him there. As it was Mr. K—'s intention for the future to live with her as his wife, he had declared himself a married man to all his acquaintance long before her arrival, nor were any of them surprized at his bringing home a woman, whom he acknowledged as his lawful wife. She was always called by his name, and ever treated and considered as a wife by him; and from their mutual happiness and affection the contrary would have never been known, had not her relations, who by all the ties of honour and generosity, were concerned to keep it a secret, taken every opportunity of divulging it to the world, and from a pretended regard for her reputation, endeavoured to publish her shame.

As Mr. K— could not find an house to his mind, he took her to his lodgings near the Mansion house, where however they did not continue long; for to use the expression of a gentleman, who published an account in one of the public news papers, signed J. A. L. the people of the house where they lodged, did not altogether approve their conduct; and indeed it would be surprizing if they had, for Mr. K— was obliged to arrest his landlord for above twenty pounds
that

that he had lent him, a step which it is probable this same landlord did not entirely approve.

From this lodging they removed to Mr. P—s in Cock-lane near West Smithfield. But it soon unfortunately happened, that his present landlord had the very same cause of dislike to Mr. K— that his former landlord had. Money was borrowed by this as well as the former, and the same slow disposition to repay it appeared in the new as well as the old. Mr. K— was therefore obliged to have recourse once more to law, and to sue his new landlord for twelve pounds, after many vain solicitations for payment. This, as may naturally be expected, created uneasiness and disturbances between them, and the quarrel rose to such an height, that at last he left Mr. P—'s house at an hour's warning, and took another lodging, at a jeweller's in the same neighbourhood, an inconvenient apartment indeed, but which he expected would serve for a short time, till an house which he had taken in Bartlet-court was fitted up.

Thus far then we see nothing so very culpable in the conduct of Mr. K—; there was neither inveigling nor incest in the case, as the world has been taught to believe, the lady's coming to London was almost against his consent, and his living with her after as his wife, was what the canon law would have allowed, had it not been for the child by his former wife, which was born
alive

alive. This light circumstance prevented a public marriage; but to remedy this, the young lady and he took every precaution to live faithfully together, and to unite their friendship by the ties also of interest. They made their wills mutually in each others favour; Mr. K—'s fortune was considerable; hers only amounted to a bare hundred pound; so that if there was any advantage on either side, it was on the part of the young lady. Yet how has this been misrepresented to the public by the same gentleman in the news papers, who signs himself J. A. L. He seems to intimate, that the lady was inveigled from her friends, and then decoyed into making a will, prejudicial to her own interests. But who is this Person, who so disinterestedly espouses the cause of public justice, and takes this open method of aspersing Mr. K—. There is a gentleman of K—'s acquaintance, the initials of whose name are these letters, and whether he really was or not concerned in the publication, will be shortly made appear in a due course of justice.

If there be any thing very culpable in Mr. K—'s behaviour, the public has now seen it; perhaps a rigid moralist would censure him in some instances of it, but certain I am, there are few who, conscious of their own transgressions, could not pardon him; what the reader has seen however is the only indefensible part of his character;

racter; in all other respects he was entirely blameless, and what follows of his conduct, is as open, and as well attested, as any evidence that was ever given, and which, instead of reproach, will perhaps merit approbation.

At his new lodging he had not remained above a week, when Mrs. L — was taken ill; a physician was immediately sent for, who had occasionally visited her before; an apothecary was employed, and every precaution taken that tenderness could suggest. But the reader will best determine on the manner of her treatment by the following certificate, drawn up by the physician himself, and signed by him and the apothecary.

SOME time in November 1759, I visited Mr. K— at his lodgings at Mr. P—'s in Cock-lane, and was then retained, to attend the deceased F—— in her expected labour, she being then in the sixth month of her pregnancy. In the course of the following months, I visited her occasionally, twice or thrice in the same house; on the 25th of January following, I received a message from Mr. K—, about nine in the morning, that the lady was ill, and wanted my assistance; I found them removed from P——'s, to an inconvenient apartment in the neighbourhood. I found the
lady,

lady, deceived by an acute pain in the back, into an opinion that she was actually in labour; but on my declaring the contrary, found not only she, but the women about her, were extremely uneasy, still suspecting I had formed a wrong judgment; after a few hours, Mr. K— informed me, he had taken a house in Bartlet's-court, near Red-lyon street Clerkenwell, and, if I thought there was no danger, would be glad to remove her thither; I told him, there were no signs of labour, but that, from the symptoms, she would probably be ill some time, as I apprehended an eruptive fever, tho' I had not, at that time, any suspicion of the small-pox, as I did not know she had never had them. In the afternoon, I attended the deceased in a coach (having properly secured her from receiving any injury by cold) to the house; Mr. K— having been before sent, to prepare the apartment. I had her immediately put to bed, ordered her to be bled, and prescribed such cordial medicines, as I thought were proper to throw out an eruption; a nurse was immediately provided, and all necessaries, for the care of the sick patient. The next morning, I met Mr. Jones her apothecary, by appointment, the eruption began to appear, and from the violent lumbago of the day before, and other symptoms, we prognosticated a confluent small-pox, of a very virulent nature; Mr. K— was inform'd, that in her situation, the most favourable species of that distemper, would be extremely hazardous;

dous; and that her's being a bad sort, the danger was very great; we endeavoured to assist nature, by early blisterings, and administered medicines of a cordial nature; the symptoms were, for the first four or five days, rather favourable; but, when maturation should have been performed, the pulse flagged, the fever sunk, and the whole eruption put on a wharty pallid appearance; and, as she could not swallow, but with difficulty, she could but seldom be prevailed on to take any thing; she was herself sensible of her danger, and Mr. K— was told, she could not survive three or four days; he was advised therefore to procure a minister to visit her, which was accordingly done; for the last two days, no persuasion could bring her to taste any thing; so that, for near fifty hours before she died, she hardly swallowed a pint of any fluid whatever, and that only, when myself, or the apothecary were present to administer it to her. The last morning of her life we found her extreemly low, her eyes sunk, her speech failing, and her intellects very imperfect; we told Mr. K—, she could not then live twelve hours.—Accordingly, a short time after we left her, her speech was wholly taken from her, she became senseless, a little convulsed, and expired in the evening, viz. on the 2d of Feb. 1762.

T. C.

The foregoing is a true relation of the case of F———, which we, who attended her in her

her illness, are ready to attest : as witness our hands,

THO. COOPER, M. D.
Northumberland-street,
Charing-Cross.

J. A. JONES, Apothecary,
Grafton-street, Soho.

Feb. 8, 1762.

By this we find the lady taken ill of a disorder, in itself extremely dangerous, still more so, at her mature time of life, but most of all so, as the patient was now far advanced in her pregnancy. We see her treated in the most judicious manner by persons of learning and credit, her danger prognosticated with judgment and accuracy ; and her disorder going thro' all the regular but fatal stages, peculiar to the small-pox alone, together with her death foretold, and prepared for four days before it happened.

After such an attestation, we may judge what credit is to be given to the supposed ghost, when among the rest of her answers, she asserts, that she was poisoned but three hours before she died. It here appears, she swallowed nothing but in the presence of the physician, at least fifty hours before her death ; and, in fact, there was no great necessity to poison her, if there had been such an intention, and if she could swallow, when the doctor and apothecary both

both joined in asserting she could not live twelve hours; and when the symptoms of approaching death but too visibly promised to anticipate the operations of even the strongest poison, so as to make the perpetration needless.

After such a full vindication therefore, the reader may judge what credit is to be given to the calumny of the person who subscribes himself R—— B——, a man, at best——but I will have more tenderness to his character than he had to that of Mr. K——; it is enough to observe, that he was connected with her relations, and saw nothing that he relates, there can be no credit therefore given to this man, when he assures the public, that she was *purely*, or in a fair way of doing well, the day before she died.

In fact, so far from being so, that she perceived herself the approaches of death, and prevailed on Mr. K—— to send for one Mr. M——, an eminent attorney of her acquaintance, to examine her will in Mr. K——'s favour, and if not found a good one, to draw it over anew. Upon Mr. M——'s declaring the will to be good, she asked this gentleman, if it could not be made still more strongly in Mr. K——'s favour: to which he replied in the negative: upon which, declaring her satisfaction, Mr. K—— asked her, if she would chuse to give any thing to any of her relations?

lations? to which she replied, no: he then desired to know, if she chose to divide her cloaths among her sisters? to which she answered with some emotion, I have nothing to give to any one but you. She was at that time sensible, and surely, had she herself suspected any foul treatment, she would never have carried her affection so far, as to reward the cause of her destruction.

But she was also attended by a divine of the church of England, Mr. A——, a gentleman equally remarkable for his benevolence, learning, and morals: he was a witness to Mr. K—'s treatment and her behaviour; he declares, and has often declared, that never, during the time of his visits, did he see a grief more expressive than in Mr. K—, nor a tenderness more affecting than in the deceased.

As soon as she died, Mr. K— sent her sister, who lived in Pall-mall, the earliest notice; ordered an undertaker to make as good a coffin as he could, both lined and covered; but being apprehensive of a prosecution, if he gave her his own name upon it; and being unwilling to give her any other, he desired that no name should be fixed; but afterwards, when called upon for to have her name registered; finding himself obliged to give some name, he gave her his own, being determined she should not suffer reproach, whatever might be the result.

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Her funeral was as decent as his circumstances could permit; and her sister, who was present, wept over the corpse for some time before the coffin was screwed down; by which it farther appears, what credit should be given to the aforefaid B——, when he says, *that her sister was deprived of the pleasure of seeing her dear sister's body, as the coffin had been screwed down some time before she came to the house.* Her sister wept for some time over the body while yet exposed, and the coffin being then screwed down, she attended it with the company to the vault in St. J—— Clerkenwell, and seemed at that time well satisfied with her sister's treatment. Mr. K— upon their return, offered her any part of the cloaths of the deceased, or the whole, if she chose them: to which she replied, that she looked upon Mr. K—'s behaviour to her sister in the same light as if they had been actually married; and that he was welcome to all that he was possessed of belonging to her sister.

Such is the plain narrative of the behaviour of Mr. K— to Miss L—, not supported by mere assertion, but by facts that will bear the strictest scrutiny; not by witnesses remote or obscure, but by persons of undoubted credit, candour, and veracity; not produced as supporters of a controversy, for the accusation is too ridiculous to admit one, but mentioned in order to carry conviction. And, indeed, it was happy for him, that his conduct was observed
by

by a greater number of persons than are generally present upon such occasions, his behaviour could admit of no suspicion, and there were no suspicious characters concern'd in the transaction.

A person who had behaved in so fair and open a manner, might surely have no reason to expect reproach upon this affair ; he might rest in security, that no accusation or calumny, arising from his former conduct, could affect him now ; but he was attacked from a quarter, that no person in his senses could in the least have imagined, in a manner, that but to mention, would have excited the laughter of thousands ; after an interval of two years, all of a sudden, he was surprized with the horrid imputation of being a murderer, of having murdered the person he held most dear upon earth, of having murdered her by poison : and who is his accuser ? Why, a ghost ! The reader laughs ; yet, ridiculous as the witness is, groundless as the accusation, it has served to make one man compleatly unhappy. The slightest evils, by frequent repetition, at last become real misfortunes, and the imputation of great crimes, however unsupported, often blacken a character more than the commission of smaller ones.

I would not chuse to pall the reader with a repetition of transactions, which he has already heard too often repeated, but the story of the ghost is in brief, as follows : — For some time a knocking and scratching has
D
been

been heard in the night at Mr. P——s's, where Mr. K— and Mrs. L— formerly lodged, to the great terror of the family; and several methods were tried, to discover the imposture, but without success. This knocking and scratching was generally heard in a little room, in which Mr. P——s's two children lay; the eldest of which was a girl about twelve or thirteen years old. The purport of this knocking was not thoroughly conceived, till the eldest child pretended to see the actual ghost of the deceased lady mentioned above. When she had seen the ghost, a weak, ignorant publican also, who lived in the neighbourhood, asserted that he had seen it too; and Mr. P——s himself, (the gentleman whom Mr. K— had disobliged by suing for money) he also saw the ghost about the same time: the girl saw it without hands, in a shroud; the other two saw it with hands, all luminous and shining. There was one unlucky circumstance however in the apparition: though it appeared to three several persons, and could knock, scratch, and flutter, yet its coming would have been to no manner of purpose, had it not been kindly assisted by the persons thus haunted. It was impossible for a ghost that could not speak, to make any discovery; the people therefore, to whom it appeared, kindly undertook to make the discovery themselves; and the ghost, by knocking, gave its assent to their method of wording the accusation; thus there was nothing illegal on any side, Mr. K——s's character was blackened, without an accuser; the persons haunted only asked questions, no doubt, mere-

ly from curiosity, without any assertion that could be reprehended; and answers by knocking could by no means be looked upon as a legal cause of impeachment. Thousands, who believed nothing of the matter came, in order, if possible, to detect its falsehood, or satisfy curiosity; and the words poison and murder being frequently joined with the name of the supposed offender, that name became every where public, joined to an accusation, which, whether believed or not in itself, is to a sensible mind sufficient misery: to become every where remarkable by imputed guilt, is certainly a state of uneasiness, that only falls short of a consciousness of real villainy.

When therefore the spirit taught the assistants, or rather the assistants had taught the spirit, (for that could not speak) that Mr. K— was the murderer, the road lay then open, and every night the farce was carried on, to the amusement of several, who attended with all the good-humour, which the spending one night with novelty inspires; they jested with the ghost, soothed it, flattered it, while none was truly unhappy, but him whose character was thus repeatedly rendered odious, and trifled with, merely to amuse idle curiosity.

To have a proper idea of this scene, as it is now carried on, the reader is to conceive a very small room with a bed in the middle, the girl,

at the usual hour of going to bed, is undressed, and put in with proper solemnity ; the spectators are next introduced, who sit looking at each other, suppressing laughter, and wait in silent expectation for the opening of the scene. As the ghost is a good deal offended at incredulity, the persons present are to conceal theirs, if they have any, as by this concealment they can only hope to gratify their curiosity. For, if they shew either before, or when the knocking is begun, a too prying, inquisitive, or ludicrous turn of thinking, the ghost continues usually silent, or, to use the expression of the house, Miss Fanny is angry. The spectators therefore have nothing for it, but to sit quiet and credulous, otherwise they must hear no ghost, which is no small disappointment to persons, who have come for no other purpose.

The girl who knows, by some secret, when the ghost is to appear, sometimes apprizes the assistants of its intended visitation. It first begins to scratch, and then to answer questions, giving two knocks for a negative, and one for an affirmative. By this means it tells whether a watch, when held up, be white, blue, yellow, or black ; how many clergymen are in the room, though in this sometimes mistaken ; it evidently distinguishes white men from negroes, with several other marks of sagacity ; however, it is sometimes mistaken in questions of a private nature,

nature, when it deigns to answer them: for instance; the ghost was ignorant where she dined upon Mr. K—'s marriage; how many of her relations were at church upon the same occasion; but particularly, she called her father John instead of Thomas, a mistake indeed a little extraordinary in a ghost; but perhaps she was willing to verify the old proverb, that *it is a wise child that know its own father*. However, though sometimes right, and sometimes wrong, she pretty invariably persists in one story, namely, that she was poisoned, in a cup of purl, by red arsenic, a poison unheard of before, by Mr. K— in her last illness; and that she heartily wishes him hanged.

It is no easy matter to remark upon an evidence of this nature; but it may not be unnecessary to observe, that the ghost, though fond of company, is particularly modest upon these occasions, an enemy to the light of a candle, and always most silent before those, from whose rank and understanding she could most reasonably expect redress. When a committee of gentlemen of eminence for their rank, learning, and good sense, were assembled to give the ghost a fair hearing, then, one might have thought, would have been the time to knock loudest, and to exert every effort; then was the time to bring the guilty to justice, and to give every possible method of information; but in what manner she behaved upon this test of her reality, will better appear

appear from the committee's own words, than mine. Their advertisement runs thus ;

“ I think it proper to acquaint the Public, that the following account of the proceedings of the committee of gentlemen, who met at my house on Monday evening, in order to enquire into the reality of the supposed visitation of a departed spirit at a house in Cock-lane, is alone authentick, and was drawn up, with the concurrence and approbation of the assembly, while they were present ; and that the account in the Ledger of this day contains many circumstances not founded in truth.

STE. ALDRICH.”

Feb. 1. 1762.

“ On this night, many gentlemen, eminent for their rank and character, were, by the invitation of the Rev. Mr. Aldrich of Clerkenwell, assembled at his house for the examination of the noises supposed to be made by a departed spirit, for the detection of some enormous crime”.

“ About ten at night the gentlemen met in the chamber, in which the girl, supposed to be disturbed by a spirit, had, with proper caution, been put to bed by several ladies : they sat rather more than an hour, and hearing nothing, went down stairs, where they interrogated the father of the girl, who denied, in the strongest terms, any knowledge or belief of fraud.”

“ The

“ The supposed spirit had before publicly promised, by an affirmative knock, that it would attend one of the gentlemen into the vault under the church of St. John, Clerkenwell, where the body is deposited, and give a token of her presence there by a knock upon her coffin ; it was therefore determined to make this trial of the existence or veracity of the supposed spirit.”

“ While they were enquiring and deliberating, they were summoned into the girl’s chamber by some ladies, who were near her bed, and who had heard knocks and scratches : when the gentlemen entered, the girl declared, that she felt the spirit like a mouse upon her back ; and was required to hold her hands out of bed. From that time, though the spirit was very solemnly required to manifest its existence, by appearance, by impression on the hand, or body of any present, by scratches, knocks, or any agency, no evidence of any preternatural power was exhibited.”

“ The spirit was then very seriously advertised, that the person, to whom the promise was made of striking the coffin, was then about to visit the vault, and that the performance of the promise was then claimed. The company, at one, went into the church, and the gentleman, to whom the promise was made, went, with one
more,

more, into the vault. The spirit was solemnly required to perform its promise; but nothing more than silence ensued. The person, supposed to be accused by the spirit, then went down, with several others, but no effect was perceived. Upon their return, they examined the girl, but could draw no confession from her: between two and three, she desired, and was permitted, to go home with her father."

"It is therefore the opinion of the whole assembly, that the child has some art of making or counterfeiting particular noises, and that there is no agency of any higher cause."

Such an account will convince those who are under the influence of reason, but nothing can gain over some, who from their infancy have been taught to believe, but not to think. To convince such it were to be wished, that the committee had continued their scrutiny a night or two longer, by which means the impostor would in all probability be caught in the fact, or at least more thoroughly detected. For if the ghost persisted in such company to continue silent, it would then be obvious, that it was afraid of the discovery it pretended to aim at; or if it continued to knock or scratch, the noises, by explaining themselves, could not long frustrate a judicious enquiry.

But

But as it is, the ghost still continues to practise as before, and in some measure remains undetected; and it is probable, that she will thus continue for a much longer time, to exhibit among friends who desire no detection, or among the curious, whose pleasure is in proportion to the deception. The ghost knows perfectly well before whom to exhibit. She could as we see venture well enough to fright the ladies, or perhaps some men, about as courageous as ladies, and as discerning; but when the committee had come up, and gathered round the bed, it was no time then to attempt at deception, the ghost was angry, and very judiciously kept her hunters at bay.

But let not the reader imagine, that I would seriously produce formal arguments to refute an accusation, which upon the first blush answers itself; what was once said to a writer, who drew up a book to prove the iniquity of the Inquisition, might in such a case be applied to me. *Men, said he, who read books of controversy, are already convinced of the absurdity you undertake to refute; while those who believe such falsehoods, never examine their own opinions, and will consequently never read yours.*

The question in this case, therefore, is not, whether the ghost be true or false, but who are

the contrivers, or what can be the motives for this vile deception? to attempt to assign the motives of any action, is not so easy a task as many imagine. A thousand events have risen from caprice, pride or mere idleness, which an undiscerning spectator might have attributed to reason, resentment, and close laid design. It would not therefore become me, who have been now endeavouring to vindicate innocence, to lay the blame of this imposture on any individual upon earth, tho' never so rationally to be suspected; All I shall say is, that, as the reader may remember, Mr. K— has many who owe him an ill will. His landlord at one house, whom he arrested for money lent him, had cause of resentment; his landlord in Cock-lane, the father of the child, whom he was obliged to sue from similar motives, was, it is to be supposed, willing enough to retaliate the supposed injury. But above all, Mrs. L——'s relations, who had filed a bill in chancery against him, just two months before this infernal agent appeared to strengthen their plea. This law-suit between him and the family of the deceased, is of a domestic nature, and therefore unfit at present to be laid before the public; all that is necessary to be mentioned, is, that their animosity has been carried to the highest pitch, and that since its commencement, they have pursued him with implacable resentment; what may be the justice of his cause, or of their anger, the proper judges and not the public

public are to determine ; but whether it goes for or against him, the world may be assur'd, that the whole true state of this chancery suit (as far as is consistent with law) will be very minutely laid before them, upon a proper occasion ; for the present it is sufficient to observe, that it was commenced in November last, while Mr. K— was upon a journey for his brother, and that when he returned, to put in his appearance, he soon found a prosecution of a much more terrible nature commenced against him, more terrible, as unexpected, and more dangerous, as the cause was unknown.

I have now as briefly, and indeed as tenderly as I could, stated the whole of this most surprizing transaction, and the reader by this time sees how far Mr. K—— is culpable. He sees him living affectionately with a woman as his wife, whom the laws of nature allowed him to love, but the strictness of the canon law forbade him to marry. He sees every possible method taken to preserve this woman's reputation and life, and the most reputable persons produced, as witnesses of her end. He sees men of the highest rank, both for birth, character, and learning, joined to acknowledge the whole of the pretended ghost, as an imposition upon the public ; and lastly, he sees those who pretend to bear witness to the accusation, persons of a mixed reputation, of gross ignorance, great cruelty, and what is more,

armed with resentment against him. I would not wish however, to turn the popular resentment upon any particular person, but I think it my duty to divert it some where from the guiltless.

But still it seems something extraordinary, how this imposition could be so long carried on without a discovery. However, when we compare it to some others, which have successfully deceived the public a yet longer time, our wonder will be in some measure diminished. It was the observation of Erasmus, that whenever people flock to see a miracle, they are generally sure of seeing a miracle; they bring an heated imagination, and an eager curiosity to the scene of action, give themselves up blindly to deception, and each is better pleased with having it to say, that he had seen something very strange, than that he was made the dupe of his own credulity. There are many alive now, who must, I suppose, remember the famous impostor Richard Hathaway, whose case is recorded in the State Trials. This ignorant creature deceived the public both successfully and long. He vomited in public crooked pins, which he had previously swallowed in private; he accused an innocent person of magic; he pretended to fast for a month together, and even in this deceived his guardians, with twenty other feats; by which means, the person he accused was actually imprisoned, and
stood

stood her trial at Guildford assizes. The circumstances were strong; but then was not the time for burning for witchcraft, as about an age before: the poor woman was acquitted, and her accuser ordered to prison in her stead; Hathaway was consigned to the care of an apothecary, who lived in Guildford, if I remember, and here guarded by a maid, who pretended to be sorry for his situation, and took part in his distress: to her therefore he confessed all his impostures, and the apothecary actually detected him at last through an hole in his chamber wall, either hiding more pins in his mouth, or making an hearty meal upon provisions the maid had stole for him. Richard however, though put in the pillory as an impostor, had many partizans of credit and reputation; and some were so credulous, as to suppose him sincere, even after his own confession to the contrary.

The people believed in Richard; but there never was an instance in which they were in general so averse to imposture as in the present attempt to deceive them: it is not known, however, what effect a continuance of those endeavours, if not silenced by proper methods, may have: it is easy to conceive how much credulity is wrought upon by perseverance, *even pious and orthodox divines themselves have been known to give credit to the strangest falsehoods of this kind:*
and

and Glanville declares his solemn belief in a ghost, whose only business consisted in playing tricks, and clattering plates and trenchers.

In fact, the people can at last be taught to believe any thing, and may probably, by perseverance, be taught to believe this; nor can I avoid deploring the easiness with which some, whose duty it is to guide them from error, suffer themselves to be led into it. A story that I am going to relate, will serve as an instance, how far the public may deceive themselves, and how far even a protestant divine may, unknowingly, help the imposture. The account is given us by Adrian Regenvolscius, a protestant divine, in a work intitled, *A Chronological System of History, respecting the Reformation in Sclavonia*; printed in Utrecht, 1652, p. 95. he mentions it as a transaction, for the truth of which he can vouch; and his prudence, and the historian's veracity are confirmed still farther by Voetius, one of the most eminent theologicians of his time, and who was himself the editor. The passage is this:

“ In the number of these obstacles to the reformation in Poland, which we have already mentioned, we may add another, namely, about the year 1597, God permitted the appearance of a certain spirit (at first it could not be said whether it was black or white) to delude several
from

from the true faith, after the old superstitions. There was a certain girl, whose name was Bietka, who was courted by a young man called Zachary; they were both natives of Weilam, and had received their education there. This youth, though in deacon's orders, and also soon expecting to be priested, was nevertheless resolved to marry Bietka, and accordingly they mutually plighted a promise to each other; but his father, in consideration of the rank which he held in the church, prevented his marriage, upon which he became melancholy, and soon after hanged himself. A short time after his death, a spirit appeared to the disconsolate Bietka, which pretended to be the soul of Zachary her lover, assuring her that he was sent by God, to apprise her of his displeasure at the rashness of his death; and that, as she had been the principal cause of his temerity, he was come to accomplish his promise to her, and to marry her. This false spirit knew perfectly well how to cajole this poor girl, by promising to enrich her so; that he at length persuaded her that he was in reality the spirit of her lover; and she accordingly plighted him her marriage vow. The noise of this extraordinary match, between a woman and a spirit was quickly spread over the whole country, and the curious, from every quarter, flocked in to be witness of so extraordinary an affair.

Many

Many of the Polish nobility, who believed in the honesty of the spirit, became intimately acquainted with him; and even many of them brought him home to their houses. By these means Bietka amassed a large sum of money, and so much the more, as the spirit would not return an answer, nor speak to a single person, nor foretell the smallest occurrence without his wife's consent. The spirit lived a whole year in the house of the *Sieur Trepka*, intendant of *Cracovia*; from thence going from house to house, he went at last to reside with a certain widow lady, whose name was *Wlodkow*, where he remained for the space of two years; and there played all the tricks of which he was capable. The principal are as follow: He told all things past and present. He talked in favour of the Roman Catholic religion, and assured his auditors, that the Reformers were all damned. He would not even permit one of them to approach him; for he considered them as unworthy his conversation; he rather persisted in assuring his audience, that their only study was novelty, and not reformation: and thus he brought back many again to popery.

Hitherto not a single creature had perceived that this spirit was the devil, nor would it have ever been known, had it not been for some *Poland*ers, who, going to *Rome* in the year of jubilee

jubilee 1600, spread the news of the spirit through the whole country. A certain Italian, who understood magic, hearing this report, among others, and being informed that the spirit had now exhibited five years, recollected that he had lost a spirit about that time, which he had long kept confined near his person. This magician therefore went to Poland, and waiting upon dame Wlodkow, demanded his property, to the astonishment of all the spectators. He insisted, that this devil, which had fled from him, should be restored back; with which reasonable request the lady instantly complied: he once more therefore shut up this malicious spirit in a ring, and brought him back to Italy, assuring the people, that, had the devil been permitted to stay in Poland much longer, he would have drawn down numberless miseries upon the nation."

One would think, that a story of this nature could hardly gain credit, and yet it deceived a whole nation for five years successively: what is still more surprizing, it deceived a Protestant divine, otherwise of sense, and of learning. I cannot avoid thinking, that there are several similar circumstances between this Polish ghost and the ghost of Cock-lane. The ghost at Cock-lane answered questions, so did Zachary; the Cock-lane ghost is visited by the nobility, so was Zachary; the Cock-lane ghost plays tricks,

so did Zachary; the Cock-lane ghost follows a girl, so did Zachary. There is one circumstance, however, in which the parallel will not hold good; Zachary was believed to be a real ghost by a Protestant divine; but I fancy no Protestant divine can be found among us, so much the old woman, as to lend even a moment's assent to the ghost in Cock-lane.

F. I N I S.
